

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1           1.       An image management system, comprising:  
2           an image acquisition device;  
3           a computer coupled to the image acquisition device, the computer including  
4           logic for receiving a diagnostic image from the image acquisition device; and  
5           a memory element associated with the computer, where the memory element  
6           stores a plurality of electronic signature files;  
7           wherein the computer includes logic for associating one of the plurality of  
8           electronic signature files with the diagnostic image.
  
- 1           2.       The image management system of claim 1, wherein each of the plurality  
2           of electronic signature files corresponds to a signature of a user of the image  
3           management system.
  
- 1           3.       The image management system of claim 2, further comprising a client  
2           application associated with the computer, where the client application instructs the  
3           computer to associate one of the plurality of electronic signature files with the  
4           diagnostic image.

1           4.       The image management system of claim 3, wherein the client  
2       application further comprises:  
3           a user interface configured to present to the user of the image management  
4       system a plurality of choices from which the user identifies him or herself as the user of  
5       the image management system so that the electronic signature file associated with the  
6       diagnostic image corresponds to the user of the image management system.

1           5.       The image management system of claim 4, where the image acquisition  
2       device is an ultrasound diagnostic device.

1           6.       The image management system of claim 5, where the electronic  
2       signature file is associated with the diagnostic image only after the entry of a password.

1           7.       The image management system of claim 1, further comprising:  
2           a network configured to couple the image acquisition device to the computer;  
3       and  
4           a network interface associated with the image acquisition device and the  
5       computer, the network interface configured to electronically transfer the diagnostic  
6       image over the network.

1           8.       A method for applying an electronic signature to a report associated  
2 with an image file, the method comprising the steps of:  
3           acquiring a diagnostic image using an image acquisition device;  
4           forwarding the diagnostic image to a computer;  
5           storing a plurality of electronic signature files in a memory associated with a  
6 computer; and  
7           associating one of the plurality of electronic signature files with the diagnostic  
8 image.

1           9.       The method of claim 8, wherein each of the plurality of electronic  
2 signature files corresponds to a signature of a user of the computer.

1           10.      The method of claim 9, further comprising the step of using a client  
2 application to instruct the computer to associate one of the plurality of electronic  
3 signature files with the diagnostic image.

1           11.      The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of presenting to a  
2 user of the image management system a plurality of choices from which the user  
3 identifies him or herself as the user of the image management system so that the  
4 electronic signature file associated with the diagnostic image corresponds to the user  
5 of the image management system.

1           12.      The method of claim 11, where the image acquisition device is an  
2 ultrasound diagnostic device.

1           13.     The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of requiring a  
2     password prior to associating one of the plurality of electronic signature files with the  
3     diagnostic image.

1           14.     The method of claim 8, further comprising the steps of:  
2             coupling the image acquisition device to the computer system over a network;  
3     and  
4             electronically transferring the diagnostic image over the network.

1           15.     A computer readable medium having a program for applying an  
2     electronic signature to a report associated with an image file, the program comprising  
3     logic for performing the steps of:  
4             receiving a diagnostic image from an image acquisition device;  
5             forwarding the diagnostic image to a computer system;  
6             storing a plurality of electronic signature files in a memory associated with a  
7     computer; and  
8             associating one of the plurality of electronic signature files with the diagnostic  
9     image.

1           16.     The program of claim 15, wherein each of the plurality of electronic  
2     signature files corresponds to a signature of a user of the image management system.

1           17.     The program of claim 16, further comprising logic for allowing a client  
2     application to instruct the computer to associate one of the plurality of electronic  
3     signature files with the diagnostic image.

1           18.     The program of claim 17, further comprising logic for presenting to a  
2     user of the image management system a plurality of choices from which the user  
3     identifies him or herself as the user of the image management system so that the  
4     electronic signature file associated with the diagnostic image corresponds to the user  
5     of the image management system.

1           19.     The program of claim 18, where the image acquisition device is an  
2     ultrasound diagnostic device.

1           20.     The program of claim 19, further comprising logic for requiring a  
2     password prior to associating one of the plurality of electronic signature files with the  
3     diagnostic image.

1           21.     The program of claim 15, further comprising logic for:  
2             coupling the image acquisition device to the computer system over a network;  
3     and  
4             electronically transferring the diagnostic image over the network.